



## January Pilot Lab Highlights

Our newest Skills for Success pilot program was recently conducted and completed at Bevill State Community College. In partnership with Wiregrass Construction Company, trainees participated in three distinct courses that all center around road building. The Shuttlebuggy Operator, Paver Operator, and Screed Operator courses presented trainees the opportunity to gain real-world experience in a safe, controlled environment and develop their skills needed to be successful in any facet of the job. Working individually and as part of a team, the participants rotated positions within each course, acquiring hands-on experience as they executed proven operator techniques.

The Skills for Success pilot programs are designed to offer comprehensive hands-on training that gives trainees the most accurate representation of the types of situations they will encounter once they enter the workforce. Once completed, these participants are well-versed in every aspect of the equipment and materials required for the job and understand the roles and responsibilities of each member of the team.

Thanks to support from the Wiregrass Construction Company, Bevill State Community College was able to offer students the valuable experience they can apply to the career opportunities in front of them.



## PILOT LABS COMING SOON

## From Pilot to Statewide Impact

Each **Skills for Success** course that we develop maintains a deliberate pilot process designed to ensure every offering is aligned with real workforce demand before launching statewide. Current pilot courses span multiple industry clusters, reflecting Alabama's diverse and evolving economy.

Manufacturing and Advanced Technologies courses in pilot include **Wood Products Machine Operator, Operator Tech Automotive, and Biotechnician**. Industry partners guide course design by defining the technical skills, safety standards, and workplace expectations required in modern manufacturing and lab environments, while also hosting pilot labs that give students hands-on experience with industry-standard equipment.

Construction, Infrastructure, and Heavy Equipment pilot courses include **Heavy Equipment Mechanic, Asphalt Lab Technician, Manufactured Housing Installer Helper, Backhoe Operator, and Water Treatment Operator Grade 2**. Employers and utilities support development by validating curriculum, hosting labs, and ensuring training that reflects real-world job sites, regulatory requirements, and safety practices.

Customer Experience and Workforce Readiness is represented through **Mastering the Customer Experience**, a pilot course shaped by employers who emphasize communication, service quality, and professionalism across frontline industries.

Each course is piloted twice, allowing instructors, colleges, and industry partners to refine content, lab delivery, and outcomes. Once the pilot phase is complete, courses are finalized and launched for deployment across all 24 colleges in the Alabama Community College System, giving colleges the flexibility to respond quickly to local workforce needs.

This structured approach ensures every **Skills for Success** course is job-ready, employer-informed, and built to deliver consistent, high-quality training statewide.

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT  
**Darlisha Davis****What is your role at the Innovation Center?**

*I serve as the Workforce Coordinator (South Region) at the Innovation Center, where I support the planning, coordination, and execution of workforce training programs. My role focuses on connecting students, colleges, and industry partners to ensure training aligns with workforce needs across the state.*

**What project, program, or initiative are you most excited about this month?**

*This month, I'm most excited about seeing Coastal's first Motor Grader Operator Lab. As one of our newest courses, it was rewarding to be a part of this lab and to see it come to life. Watching partners collaborate and participants gain hands-on experience that directly connects to workforce needs makes this initiative especially meaningful.*

**How does your work help support students, colleges, or business and industry across the state?**

*My work helps connect skill-set training with workforce demand by coordinating industry-driven training opportunities. By partnering with colleges and business and industry, I help students build the skills needed for success and support Alabama's workforce pipeline.*

**What's your favorite place in Alabama to unwind?**

*Anywhere near the water, I love the Gulf Coast. There's nothing like fresh air, sunshine, and a peaceful view; it's truly my happy place.*

# ReConnect Academy

## *Supporting a Successful Return to Community*

**ReConnect Academy** was developed through a collaboration between the ACCS Innovation Center and ACCS Adult Education to support justice-involved individuals as they transition back into their communities. Offered through ACCS Adult Education programs, the online course focuses on building practical skills that help individuals prepare for employment and move forward with confidence.

"The passion for education is the thread that unites Adult Education and the Innovation Center. Together, we are breaking down barriers and creating pathways to help more Alabamians achieve gainful employment. I am both proud and energized by the future of the **ReConnect Academy** and the lasting impact it will have on our students and our state." **DAVID WALTERS, VICE CHANCELLOR OF ADULT EDUCATION AND INTERIM PRESIDENT AT INGRAM STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

The **ReConnect Academy** course addresses essential areas such as communication, digital literacy, financial basics, health and wellness, and civic awareness. Through guided activities and real-life scenarios, individuals will gain tools to manage daily responsibilities and strengthen networks. State resources will provide additional support as participants work toward long-term stability.

**ReConnect Academy** will soon enter its pilot phase, marking an important milestone in expanding reentry-focused training across Alabama and creating new pathways to opportunity.

"Building and sustaining partnerships like the one we have with the Alabama Community College System is essential to creating real, lasting change. Programs such as **ReConnect Academy** provide individuals with a powerful opportunity to reset their path, gain meaningful skills, and envision a new way of life. These efforts not only open doors to employment and education but also play a critical role in reducing recidivism and strengthening the future of our communities." **JOHN HAMM, COMMISSIONER OF THE ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS**

Together, the ACCS Innovation Center and ACCS Adult Education continue to open doors that support successful reentry and lasting community impact.



### JANUARY SUCCESS STORIES

### NEW SIMULATORS & MOBILE TRAINING TRAILERS

Thanks to legislative funding through the Education Trust Fund, the ACCS Innovation Center has invested in new simulators and mobile training trailers designed to deliver immersive, industry career exploration directly to Alabama schools and communities.

With access to over 20 machine training simulations for construction, transportation, agriculture, and emergency services, learners can explore everything from heavy equipment and material handling, to commercial and emergency vehicles in realistic, interactive scenarios.

Look for these mobile simulators coming soon to communities statewide.

## SKILLS FOR SUCCESS STORY

On Thursday, January 22, Fodina Henderson, the Innovation Center Workforce Coordinator (North), attended a Huntsville Hiring event with **Career Connect**, AIDT, Huntsville Housing Authority, and the Huntsville Committee of 100. There were over 1,000 registrants in attendance who range from having their GED to their doctoral degree, all looking for their next opportunity. Henderson had a great time showcasing the **Skills for Success** training courses. Through our partnership with **Career Connect**, we also help individuals register for courses at their local community college post event.

*"It was an honor to introduce to some and remind others that **Skills for Success** courses are available to those needing training to secure a job. Observing numerous individuals in North Alabama actively seeking employment and having the opportunity to assist them in their job search was profoundly rewarding and emotionally moving." **FODINA HENDERSON***



## CAREER READINESS NUMBERS

Skills For Success is continuing to develop partnerships with school systems statewide, expanding the program's reach within local communities. Currently, **132 ALSDE School Systems** are served by Skills For Success, with **406 High Schools or Career Tech Centers** receiving support and job-ready training that create pathways of opportunity. We are excited to celebrate this milestone.



## MOTOR GRADER LAB

The Coastal Alabama Community College's recent Motor Grader lab was a resounding success for Coastal and the Baldwin County Commission.

Held January 22-23 in Foley, Alabama, the lab was led by Anthony Wright who trained students Blake Agerton, Luis Diosdado, Brian Farnham, Jacobie Knight, KeAnna Knight and Larry Knott on how to successfully operate a self-propelled grader to spread and level dirt, gravel, and stone during road construction. From safety procedures to motor grader components and materials, the group learned and practiced every aspect of motor grader operation.



## Episode 85

### CREATING OPPORTUNITY: WORKFORCE TRAINING THAT MATTERS

Joseph Metz, Skills for Success Coordinator at Coastal Alabama Community College



INNOVATION UNPLUGGED



## Episode 86 – Coming February 2nd

### FROM HEADLINES TO HALLWAYS: HOW STORYTELLING SHAPES LEADERSHIP

Ebony Horton Bradley



*In this episode of Innovation Unplugged, Houston Blackwood and Matt Heaton talk with Ebony Horton Bradley about why leadership is less about position and more about the stories we tell. Drawing on her background in journalism and higher education, Ebony unpacks how presence, humility, and narrative shape culture, motivate teams, and bring mission statements to life. This conversation challenges leaders to think beyond metrics and focus on the impact their words and actions leave behind.*

## Episode 87 – Coming February 9th

### TRAINING WITH PURPOSE: CITY OF FOLEY'S INVESTMENT IN CDL TALENT

City of Foley Street Development



*This episode of Innovation Unplugged highlights how the City of Foley invested in its people through CDL training delivered in partnership with Bishop State Community College and Skills for Success. City employees share what it meant to commit to training during time off, the discipline required to succeed, and how earning a CDL strengthens both their careers and public service. It's a powerful look at how workforce investment, culture, and leadership come together to deliver real community impact.*

## Episode 88 – Coming February 16th

### WHY HUMAN SKILLS MATTER: THE PERFECT PAIRING OF SKILLS FOR SUCCESS AND FLAWLESS DELIVERY

Dr. Ryan-Cate Gibson and Thea Harvey-Barrett



*Episode 88 of Innovation Unplugged explores how Flawless Delivery strengthens frontline workforce training by centering empathy, communication, and engagement—skills that elevate performance across the hospitality industry. Guests Dr. Ryan-Cate Gibson and Thea Harvey-Barrett discuss how this human-skills training pairs seamlessly with Skills for Success hospitality courses in food and beverage, hotel operations, and barista service, creating a well-rounded professional development pathway. Together, these complementary offerings equip colleges to deliver high-quality, industry-relevant training that improves morale, retention, and customer experience for hospitality professionals.*